

Samuel Keeler

I strongly oppose the proposed data center in East Wenatchee.

Chelan and Douglas Counties have something extraordinarily valuable: some of the cheapest, most abundant publicly owned hydroelectric power in the United States. That resource is a legacy of the Franklin Roosevelt's 1930s and belongs to the people of this region. It should be used to keep electricity abundant and affordable for local families, farms, small businesses, manufacturers, and future generations — not treated as an invitation for enormous technology corporations to come here and consume staggering amounts of power because they found a cheap place to plug in.

What exactly is the benefit for the people who already live here? Nothing.

Data centers consume enormous amounts of electricity, can consume substantial amounts of water depending on their cooling systems, occupy valuable industrial land, and yet employ relatively few people once construction is finished. We are being asked to trade a scarce and incredibly valuable local resource for a comparatively tiny number of permanent jobs.

That's a terrible trade.

If a technology company wants access to hundreds of megawatts of our inexpensive hydroelectric system, the burden should be on that company to demonstrate an overwhelming and lasting public benefit to Chelan and Douglas County residents. "Economic development" cannot simply mean that a multibillion-dollar corporation gets cheaper operating costs while local residents shoulder the infrastructure demands and watch our region's power capacity disappear.

And let's stop pretending electricity is an unlimited resource simply because we have dams. Every massive new industrial load represents capacity that cannot be used somewhere else. What happens as our population grows? What happens when existing businesses want to expand? What happens when homes and transportation increasingly electrify? What happens when the next employer comes along offering hundreds or thousands of good local jobs but the available power has already been committed to warehouses full of servers?

Cheap public power is one of the greatest economic advantages this region possesses. Once we give that advantage away, we don't magically get it back.

I am not anti-technology and I am not anti-development. I am against bad development and bad deals. Development should improve the lives of the people who actually live here.

If this project cannot demonstrate that its permanent jobs, tax revenue, infrastructure investment, and other tangible local benefits substantially outweigh its enormous consumption of our power and potentially our water, then the answer should be simple:

No way. Get out of our region.

Chelan and Douglas Counties are not a discount electrical outlet for Big Tech. Our public resources should serve the public first.